

REPORT

Summary of the 2018 Joint Session agenda topics and their activities

Period: december 2018 – august 2019

New topics that were initiated by the Estonian-Latvian Governmental Commission and are included in the agenda of the IGC on October 10 Joint Session:

- 1) Health care and healthcare related public services in cross-border regions;**
Initiator of the topic) Municipality of Valga
 - A) Emergency medical assistance;**
Initiator of the topic) Ministry of Social Affairs
 - B) Cross-border use of Valka Hospital services;**
Initiator of the topic) Municipality of Valga
 - C) Cooperation in health emergencies and disasters;**
Initiator of the topic) Ministry of Social Affairs
- 2) Development of joint packaging deposit system between Estonia and Latvia;**
Initiator of the topic) Ministry of Environment
- 3) Cooperation in providing passenger traffic service on Tallinn-Riga railway line.**
Initiator of the topic) Municipality of Valga

1) Health care and healthcare related public services in cross-border regions

Emergency medical assistance

Description/summary of activities undertaken after the Joint Session

Ministry of Social Affairs – On 11 December 2018, relevant Estonian and Latvian authorities had a meeting in Latvia in order to discuss issues of mutual assistance and cooperation in the field of cross-border emergency prevention, preparedness and response. It was decided at the meeting that a draft agreement between Estonia and Latvia would be prepared this year, which will be approved in the second half of the year.

Current state

Ministry of Social Affairs – The agreement is currently being negotiated with the Estonian parties.

Further plans

Ministry of Social Affairs – The Ministry wishes to continue cooperation on this issue, which aims at a common understanding of the parties in both countries, as reflected in the cooperation agreements.

Proposals to the Governmental Commission/Government

Ministry of Social Affairs – There are no proposals to the Estonian-Latvian Governmental Commission and the Government of the Republic.

Cross-border use of Valka Hospital services

Description/summary of activities undertaken after the Joint Session

Ministry of Social Affairs – On December 11, 2018, relevant Estonian and Latvian authorities had a working group meeting in Latvia, where it was concluded that the common understanding is that the problem still needs to be resolved and that parties are ready to move on. It was also decided that once the agreement on the cross-border ambulance service between Estonia and Latvia is completed, more specific steps could be taken.

Current state

Ministry of Social Affairs – Estonian relevant authorities are working on finding the best solution and completing the processes that are a prerequisite for solving this topic (e.g. Estonian-Latvian Emergency Agreement).

Further plans

Ministry of Social Affairs – In the second half of 2019, a draft agreement will be prepared and agreed with the Estonian counterparts, it will be later sent to the Latvian counterparts for further approval.

Proposals to the Governmental Commission/Government

Ministry of Social Affairs – There are no proposals to the Estonian-Latvian Governmental Commission and the Government of the Republic.

Cooperation in health emergencies and disasters

Description/summary of activities undertaken after the Joint Session

Ministry of Social Affairs – On December 11, 2018, different parties in Estonia and Latvia met in Latvia to discuss the renewal of the Estonian-Latvian emergency medical service agreement in regards of the transfer of the funds of the Estonian emergency medical care from the Health Board to the Estonian Health Insurance Fund. Issues of mutual assistance and cooperation on cross-border emergency prevention, preparedness and response were also discussed (see Cooperation on Emergency Releases). At the meeting it was decided that the current ambulance contract and consequently the sub-contracts need to be renewed due to the financing of the Estonian ambulance. In the drafting of the Framework Agreement, the need for a flexible Agreement is emphasized in order to reduce the need for future revisions. Following the meeting it was also decided that due to following governmental elections in both countries, which could lead to disruptions in the normal organization of work, to deal with technical issues during the renewal of contracts.

Current state

Ministry of Social Affairs – Coordination and negotiations have been postponed to the second half of 2019. There has also been a change of officer in the ministry, which has meant an additional amount of needed time in the development of the topic.

Further plans

Ministry of Social Affairs – Scheduled activities in which, in the second half of 2019, drafts of updated versions of the respective agreements will be completed in cooperation with the different parties. The drafts will then be sent to the Latvian counterparts. The aim is to renew legislative agreements

Proposals to the Governmental Commission/Government

Ministry of Social Affairs – There are no proposals to the Estonian-Latvian Governmental Commission and the Government of the Republic.

2) Development of joint packaging deposit system between Estonia and Latvia

Description/summary of activities undertaken after the Joint Session

Ministry of Environment – The Ministry was considering submitting an application for the 5th Call for Proposals of the Estonia-Latvia Program, which ended in June 2019. The Latvian contribution was hampered by the extraordinarily complex legislation on the deposit system. At the last moment (April-May), Latvian stakeholders started to pressurise the topic in Latvia and it needed attention.

Current state

Ministry of Environment – There are signs of a positive development as the bill passed the first reading in the Latvian Parliament and there was a second reading before Midsummer. The result of the second reading is currently unknown. The third reading is scheduled for September 2019.

Further plans

Ministry of Environment – Overcoming this obstacle is a matter for Latvia and it seems to be achievable. In the autumn, when the third reading in the Seimas has taken place and the law has been passed, the ministry will again put the project on the agenda together with Latvian colleagues. The budget could still be 0.3 M EUR and the maximum project duration is 2 years.

Proposals to the Governmental Commission/Government

Ministry of Environment – To continue the preparation of a joint project to find a solution to connect the two systems in a supportive system for both countries.

3) Cooperation in providing passenger traffic service on Tallinn-Riga railway line

Description/summary of activities undertaken after the Joint Session

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications – The State Budget Strategy 2019-2023 does not foresee funds for opening the direct connection of the Tartu-Riga passenger train as a public contract.

Current state

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications – Providing a quality service to operate the Tallinn-Riga route, it is estimated that it is necessary to purchase 3 new express trains at a total cost of 30 million EUR, plus a later grant from the state budget to cover operating costs as the sums coming from ticket sales can not cover substantial amount of costs. At the meeting of Estonian and Latvian economic ministers held in June 2019, the subject of cross-border passenger train traffic was briefly discussed, but no progress has been made.

Further plans

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications – Purchase of 6 new express trains for Tallinn-Tartu and Narva routes is a national priority in the Estonian budgetary strategy process, as the demand for these trains is exceeding the capacity of today's trains and analysis is under way to seek opportunities for finding financing measures for the investment.

The feasibility of establishing a direct link with the Southeast Estonian Passenger Train with Riga is planned to be evaluated separately on the basis of the Rail Baltic Passenger Train Logistics and Business Solutions Analysis within the framework of the new 2020+ Transport Development Plan Action Plan. Possible acquisition of new rolling stock will consider, inter alia, the financing options set out in the Fund Regulations to be established in the new period 2021-2027 of the European Union Cohesion Policy.

AS Eesti Raudtee is in talks with the Ukrainian railway company about the technical, time and financial conditions for the extension of the Kiev-Riga passenger train to Tallinn, which has just begun, and could be one of the solutions in the pre-Rail Baltic period.

Proposals to the Governmental Commission/Government

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications – There are no proposals to the Estonian-Latvian Governmental Commission and the Government of the Republic.

New topics that were initiated by the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission and are included in the agenda of the IGC on October 10 Joint Session:

- 4) **Coordination of cross-border rescue operations' procedures and plans;**
Initiator of the topic) State Fire and Rescue Service of Latvia
- 5) **Elaboration of the unified geodetic justification for the Rail Baltic railway line construction;**
Initiator of the topic) Latvian Geospatial Information Agency
- 6) **Determination, prioritisation and coordination of the list of road sections for reconstruction in the border area;**
Initiator of the topic) Latvian Ministry of Transport
- 7) **Lack of ferry transport connections between Saaremaa and Kurzeme.**
Initiator of the topic) Ventspils Free Port Authority

4) Coordination of cross-border rescue operations' procedures and plans

Description/summary of activities undertaken after the Joint Session

Rescue Board – In May 2019, a meeting of Estonian-Latvian-Lithuanian rescue service officials was held in Latvia which focused on cross-border rescue activities, including co-operation within the framework of the Joint Baltic Rescue Agreement.

Current state

Rescue Board – It was agreed that a draft paper of the Baltic Joint Rescue Arrangement Sub-Activities will be prepared and continued during this year. The aim is to clarify national capabilities and procedures for rapid assistance in the event of major emergencies and emergencies.

Further plans

Rescue Board – Renewal of the Estonian-Latvian cross-border rescue agreement and procedures have been discussed with Latvian representatives. Preparations for the activities will take place this year.

Proposals to the Governmental Commission/Government

Rescue Board – The proposal is to resolve these issues at the level of the emergency services and there are no separate proposals for the Estonian-Latvian Governmental Commission and the Government of the Republic.

5) Elaboration of the unified geodetic justification for the Rail Baltic railway line construction

Description/summary of activities undertaken after the Joint Session

Land Board – The geodesy specialists of the Estonian Land Board and the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency have a long-term cooperation. Over the past 5 years, there have been annual meetings of geodesy specialists to discuss common topics as well as future directions in the field of geodesy.

In October 2018, a working meeting of geodetic specialists of the Estonian Land Board (ELB) and the Latvian Spatial Information Agency (LGIA) took place in Riga, where one of the discussed issues was planning the development of a unified geodetic system of the Estonian-Latvian border area. In April 2019, the Rail Baltic Round Table was held in Riga to discuss issues related to railway design on the Estonian-Latvian border. A representative of the Land Board also attended the meeting. Currently, consultations are underway on the preparation of the basic task of the Rail Baltic design procurement on the Pärnu - Estonia / Latvia section. In October 2019, a new ELB and LGIA geodesy specialist meeting will take place in Tallinn to discuss the differences in geodetic systems in the border area regarding Rail Baltic design.

Current state

Land Board – There are no specific activities planned, the budget resources are limited and the Land Board has no overview of issues raised in the design of Rail Baltic in connection with different geodetic systems in the border area.

Further plans

Land Board – Due to the differences between the Estonian and Latvian geodetic systems in the border

areas, it is necessary to harmonize the geodetic systems and update corresponding geospatial (i.e. geodetic) data for easier handling of infrastructure projects, e.g., cross-border construction projects, land planning and management, location-based services, state border maintenance etc.

The aim is to provide up-to-date and harmonized location-based data and services in border areas for the public use, which greatly simplifies the development of various infrastructures and services. Different spatial models shall be developed for the entire border area (about 340 km).

Within the framework of the harmonization of the Estonian and Latvian geodetic systems, a geodetic infrastructure will be created in the border area, which includes geodetic infrastructure and measurements (global positioning, levelling, gravimetric surveys), and computational work. The aim is to create a reference height surface (geoid model) used on global positioning equipment for the transition between the Estonian and Latvian height systems and the transformation parameters for the state coordinate systems that ensure sufficient accuracy for the constructional geodetic works.

It would be necessary to create a uniform coordinate and elevation system (along with the geoid model) for the border area, as well as to analyze the transition of the coordinate and elevation system according to the official geodetic system of Estonia and Latvia (including geoid model). This requires data on both Estonian and Latvian geodetic networks, additional measurements might also be required. The current obstacle is the uncertainty on the progress of the Rail Baltic project and its' timetable. As a result, we are currently unable to predict future actions. If it is necessary to take steps to create a uniform coordinate and / or elevation system in the border area, the Land Board's budget does not have the resources for it. The Latvian counterparts should be met and discussed in advance. Apparently, an analysis should also be commissioned from a competent organization (eg TalTech or Estonian University of Life Sciences). The RB project team could share their schedule if there is a need for further action.

Proposals to the Governmental Commission/Government

Land Board – Due to the differences between the Estonian and Latvian geodetic systems in the border areas, it is necessary to harmonize the geodetic systems and update corresponding geospatial (i.e. geodetic) data for easier handling of infrastructure projects, e.g., cross-border construction projects, land planning and management, location-based services, state border maintenance etc. If steps are needed to create a unified coordinate and/or elevation system in the border area, the Land Board's budget will require additional resources.

6) Determination, prioritisation and coordination of the list of road sections for reconstruction in the border area

Description/summary of activities undertaken after the Joint Session

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications – The Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications and the Latvian Ministry of Transport reflect the joint need expressed during the August 21 Joint Session of the Estonian and Latvian Governments to request funds from the 2021-2027 period Interreg programmes: 1) Gaujiena – Lejaskrogs – Eesti-Läti piir – Taheva – Valga; 2) Bārdaskrogs – Eesti-Läti piir – Krabi ja 3) Ērgeme – Omuļi – Eesti-Läti piir – Kõrtsi – Tõrva. There are additional activities planned at the moment in regard of the state roads by parties.

Further plans

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications – There are additional activities planned at the moment in regard of the state roads by parties.

Proposals to the Governmental Commission/Government

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications – There are no proposals to the Estonian-Latvian Governmental Commission and to the Government of the Republic.

7) Lack of ferry transport connections between Saaremaa and Kurzeme

Description/summary of activities undertaken after the Joint Session

Municipality of Saaremaa – In May 2019, the procurement documents were prepared and the council of the Municipality of Saaremaa also gave an approval for organizing the procurement and negotiations with representatives of the Ventpils Free Port. In addition, a meeting was held with representatives of Ventpils Free Port, during which the procurement was agreed and financing possibilities were discussed.

The call is on the procurement register and two interested parties have responded to it.

Current state

Municipality of Saaremaa – In June 2019, the municipal government launched a public procurement procedure "Finding an operator for the Mõntu-Ventspils shipping line" (reference 210808). A protocol of joint intentions has also been signed with the Free Port of Ventspils. The municipality government has submitted a project for marketing activities (with the cost of 30 000€) for launching the Mõntu-Ventspils shipping line under the measure titled "Support measure for the implementation of county development strategies". The measure is intended for compiling a list of eligible projects.

Meanwhile, the risk assessment of State aid was also a problem, but it came to the conclusion that when a public procurement is open to all and meets the Altmarg criteria, the municipal government should not contravene the State aid rules. At the moment, in the context of the municipal government procurement, the issue is that the municipality has built it in such a way that all the ticket revenue remains with the carrier. This is on the understanding that in such a solution the carrier might also have an interest in marketing the route. Here, however, lies the danger of going against the Altmarg criteria. Another danger with the Altmarg criteria is that for such a line, the municipality is unable to assess how much a reasonable profit would be. In addition, there is a possibility that there will be only one contender – this would also mean going against the criteria.

Funding is currently open for financing by the Ventspils Free Port. One of the prerequisites for the operation of the line is support from both sides. The municipal government does not know exactly what the legal form of the Ventspils Free Port is, but according to them, it is a joint venture of state and local government, which receives funding from its activities and also from the budget of both shareholders. As the budget of the Ventspils local government is very tight, the Latvians had to apply for the funding from the state after they had received the estimated annual grant amount.

Further plans

Municipality of Saaremaa – We hope to find out the winner of the procurement in the council by September or October 2019. We see that the passenger traffic could start in the summer of 2020, but this depends on whether the Ventspils receives a co-financing decision.

Proposals to the Governmental Commission/Government

Municipality of Saaremaa – The municipal government proposes an enquire for additional information from the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Committee on the possible financing of the route at the joint Estonian-Latvian Intergovernmental Commission meeting in 2019 to clarify co-financing opportunities for the Latvian side and whether Latvia sees any obstacles finance. The municipal government also wonders whether a similar approach would be feasible in Estonia, with the state supporting co-financing of this route?